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Fatherhood and the Influence of Spouses Postpartum Depression on Relationship Satisfaction



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Introduction

Postpartum depression (PPD) has been extensively studied in women, but little research has been done on its effects on their partners. The postnatal period presents a multitude of difficulties for fathers, yet there is limited knowledge on the coping mechanisms adopted by fathers who live with a depressed partner. Postpartum depression not only impacts the mother but also has implications for the family unit, which may consequently affect the relationship contentment of couples embarking on this new journey. This proposal aims to explore the coping styles of fathers whose partners have PPD and how it affects their relationship satisfaction. The study will use a mixed-method design with semi-structured interviews and surveys, recruiting 20 couples where the mother has been clinically diagnosed with PPD. The results are expected to reveal themes describing fathers' experiences and highlight the need for education on PPD and support for fathers.

References

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Research Question

What are the real-life experiences of fathers whose partners are afflicted with postpartum depression and to what extent, if any, does it impact their relationship satisfaction?

Materials and Methodology

Research design: Mixed-methods
Sample size: 20 couples, 10 fathers and 10 mothers

Materials: Survey questionnaires, interview schedule

Methodology: A structured survey will be given to each participant prior to individual semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The interviews will consist of a flexible schedule with non-directive, open-ended questions allowing participants to go into depth about their answers from the survey and their overall lived experiences.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Must be 18 years of age or older
2. Must be able to speak, read and understand English
3. Must be the infant's biological father
4. Partner or spouse must be suffering from symptoms of PPD
5. Must be living with said partner
6. Mother must be at least 2 months postpartum

Analysis

The study will be rooted in both an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as well as thematic analysis. IPA focuses on how individuals describe the phenomenon, and the author develops a description of the experience about the phenomenon. Thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data

Conclusion

The research proposal aims to shed light on the challenges faced by fathers whose partners are experiencing symptoms of PPD, explore their coping strategies, and identify their support needs. Additionally, it seeks to gain insight into how mothers perceive their partner's handling of the situation. The study enhances our comprehension of how men from this demographic perceive PPD, which could be utilized to educate nurses, healthcare providers, and early parenting professionals. By recognizing these experiences and their consequences, health professionals can enhance their interventions and support when assisting families to adapt to parenthood, both at an individual and couple level.

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